

Certified Forage Tidbits

Seasonal Summary of the Montana Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Program
ISSUE 04 JANUARY 2019



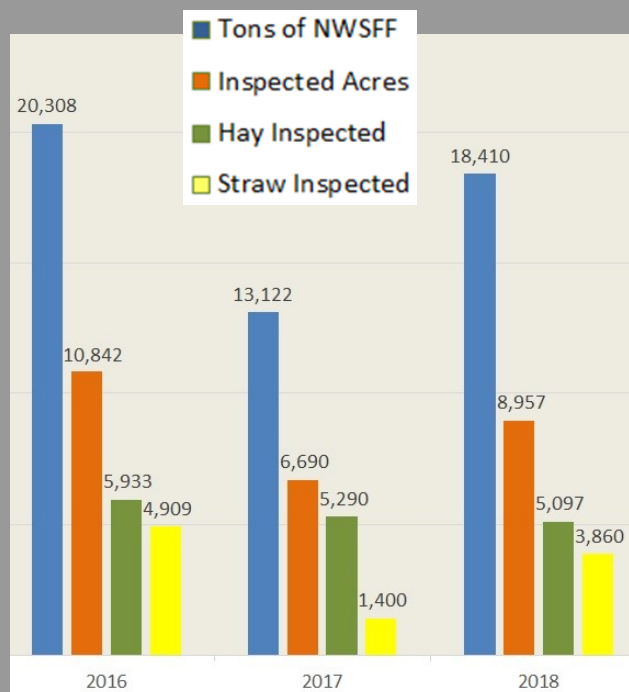
Quick and easy ways to label and identify Certified Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage



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2018 Certified Forage Season Summary



After each growing season, the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage (NWSFF) Program analyzes the number of acres inspected by field inspectors. The graph shows the season end summary for the past three years. This growing season had a significant increase in total tons of forage produced and total acres of straw inspected. Two other decreases this year: new producers and total producer participation. In 2018 there were only 14 new producers and a total of 174 producers participating in the NWSFF Program.

Certified Hay Production:

5,097 acres inspected
4,958 acres certified
11,294 tons produced

Certified Straw Production:

3,860 acres inspected
3,858 acres certified
7,116 tons produced

Certified Forage Producers:

174 producers participated
222 total inspections

Looking Back at the U.S. Hay Market over the Last Century

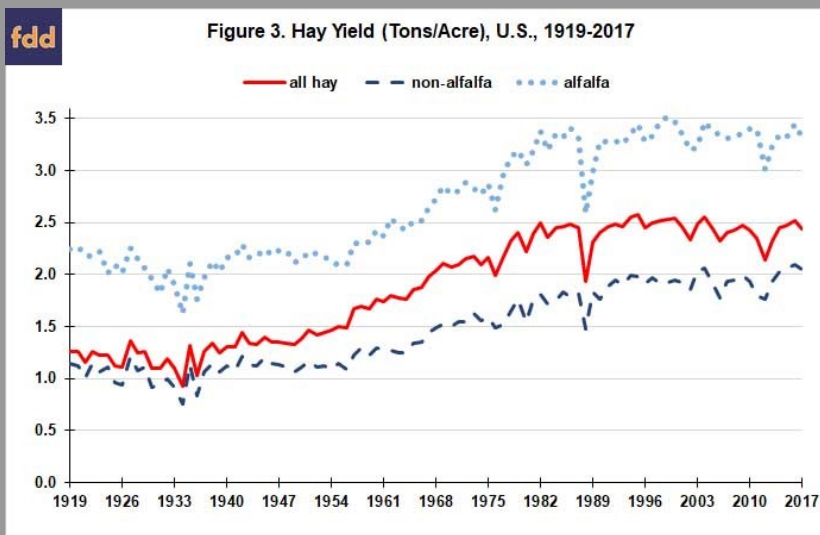
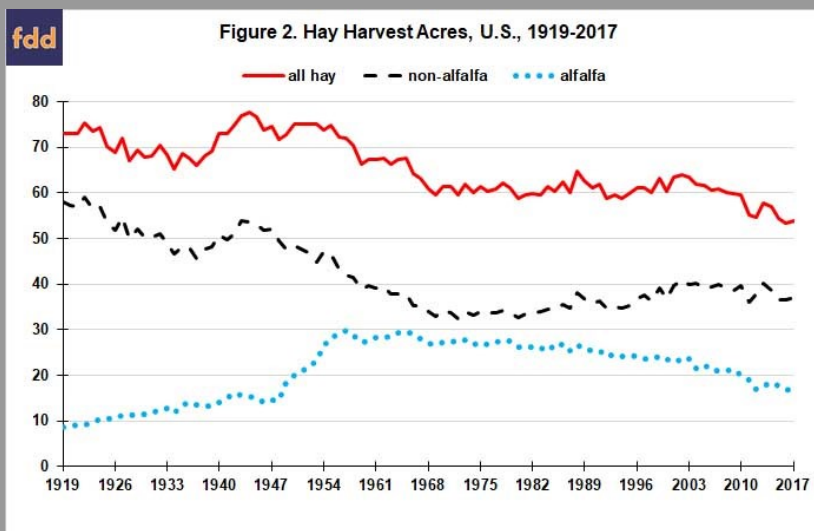
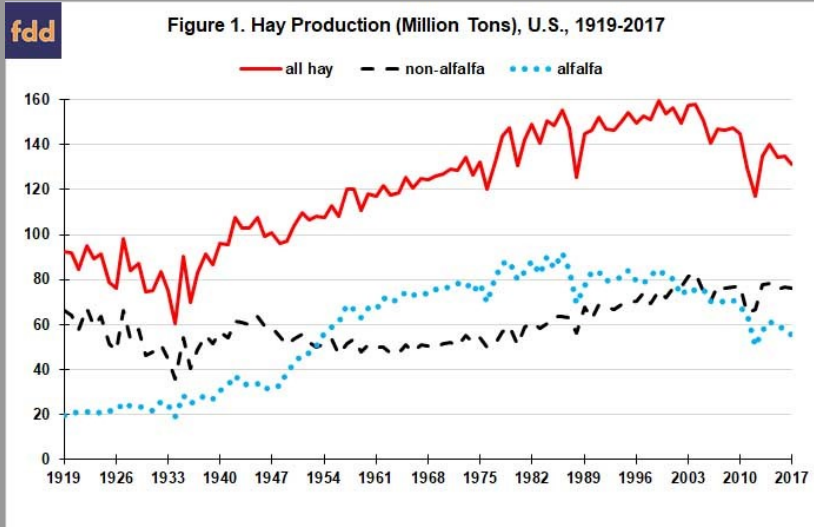
A Closer Look: Examining the trends in hay production since 1919.

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois released a report in September chronicling the last century of the United States hay market from 1919 to 2017. The study was done to further understand the U.S. hay market and its importance to both market and policy considerations. Hay is the third largest crop by total acres harvested in the entire United States. In Montana alone, 1.8 million acres of hay (alfalfa) were harvested in 2018, making it the national leader in this category for the third consecutive year. (USDA National Agricultural Statistics Services)

There are several key points in this report that are potentially relevant to producers here in Montana:

- ◆ Nationally, total acres of hay are trending lower;
- ◆ A probable cause of this trend is the decline in the price of hay relative to the price of corn for much of the 21st century;
- ◆ Since 1980, alfalfa acres have declined 37% and non-alfalfa acres have increased 12%. This has led to a general decline in alfalfa's share of all hay acres from 45% to 31%.

Article Citation: Zulauf, C. "U.S. Hay Market over the Last 100 Years." *farmdoc daily* (8): 174, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, September 19, 2018.



New Program Coordinator!

Just a quick introduction from the new Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Program Coordinator. My name is Rory Ruffner and I started with the Montana Department of Agriculture at the end of October. It's a good time of year to become familiar with this program and all the other issues the Department deals with in the Noxious Weed Management world. Dave, Jasmine, and Carol have been very helpful and patient with me as I begin to learn all there is to know about the role of the Noxious Weed Section in managing weeds throughout the state of Montana. For the last 17 years, I worked for the Department of Defense managing military training lands for the Montana Army National Guard at Fort Harrison. Among the numerous job duties performed in that time, noxious weed management was a critical aspect in ensuring the military's ability to effectively train soldiers for combat. This included

spraying weeds, oversight of contract sprayers, education of visiting soldiers, and EDRR of new invaders and infestations. I'm excited to be a part of the team here in Helena and look forward to working with you all. Feel free to contact me at rory.ruffner@mt.gov or (406) 444-7819. I welcome your thoughts on the NWSFF Program and your ideas on promoting or improving the program.



Certified Forage Benefits

Certified forage provides producers with a benefit to market a weed seed free product to forage buyers needing the certified forage for public lands, their own property, or reclamation work.

The NWSFF Program is a true weed prevention tool for keeping noxious weeds and undesirable plants out of the backcountry. As a result, certified forage is required when horses or pack animals are used on public lands in Montana.



Hunt on
Public
Lands?





Certified forage is REQUIRED!


Find certified forage products at: **AGR.mt.gov**



Photo by: Terry Reed

Redesigned Certified Forage Brochure!

The redesigned brochure to help promote certified forage to those folks that own horses, mules, and other livestock is available. Certified hay and straw are good tools for noxious weed prevention. The goal for this brochure is to get it out to feed stores for their customers to hopefully influence them to Buy Smarter! If you know places to distribute this brochure, please contact Rory at rory.ruffner@mt.gov.



Buy Smarter
Choose Certified Forage.

Using Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage prevents the spread of noxious weeds in Montana!

Noxious Weed Prevention Starts with You!

Noxious weed control starts with making informed decisions about how to protect your land from noxious weeds. Montana law requires landowners to manage state listed noxious weeds from spreading or going to seed on their property. One way landowners with livestock can protect their land from noxious weeds is to *Buy Smarter* and feed MT certified forage. When you purchase certified products (hay, straw, whole oats, pellets, and cubes) you are buying forage that has been certified as noxious weed seed free. By making the decision to *Buy Smarter* you are helping prevent the spread of noxious weeds!

Twine:
Blue and orange twine is an approved marker for baled noxious weed seed free hay or straw. Each bale only needs one strand of twine to mark it as certified. Producers are responsible for ensuring each bale is properly labeled when selling their certified forage.

Tags:
Small red tags are also an approved marker for hay or straw baled as certified noxious weed seed free. Each tag is uniquely numbered as a way to identify the producer and the inspector that certified the field. Tags must be on each bale.

Labels:
Orange adhesive labels are used as approved markers for certified bugged feeds, such as pellets, cubes, and grain. These labels are also individually identified by a number to show the feed and the facility was certified by an approved inspector.

Certified Forage Benefits.
In 1993, Montana's legislators realized that the natural resources of the state needed to be protected from noxious weeds and their seeds; so they passed the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Act.

- Inspected for noxious and regional weeds.
- Poisonous plants are not allowed in NWSFF.

Reasons to Buy Smarter:

- Required on public lands.
- Fields where certified forage is harvested from must be inspected every year.
- The cost of preventing noxious weeds is much cheaper than the costs associated with noxious weed control.
- Choosing certified forage protects your animals from toxic or poisonous plants or weeds.
- Reduces new noxious weeds from being introduced onto private property.
- Feeding certified forage helps protect county fairgrounds during 4-H and rodeo events.

Transportation Certificates:
When you *Buy Smarter* and choose certified forage that is baled, marked with twine or tags, make sure to request a transportation certificate from the producer. This document provides **authenticity** of certification between the producer and the customer. The certificate has important information as to what year the hay or straw was inspected, the inspector that certified the field, and specifics about the hay.

Winter 2018-19 Outlook: El Niño?

By: Montana Drought and Climate, University of Montana

According to the Montana Climate Office at the University of Montana, weather prediction models favor a warmer than average winter for most of the state and drier than average winter for the northern and northwestern portion of Montana. Known as the El Niño Southern Oscillation, this natural seasonal fluctuation of the temperature of the Pacific Ocean can greatly effect weather in North America.

Other points of interest from this latest newsletter include:

- ◆ The northern and northwestern parts of Montana were drier than normal this past summer. The southern and eastern parts of Montana were wetter than normal.
- ◆ Some portions of southern Montana experienced over double the normal amount of precipitation this summer. Soil moisture remains above normal for most of Montana east of the Rockies.
- ◆ When planning for planting conditions next spring, keep in mind these predictions for a warmer and drier winter statewide.

Source: Montana Climate Office, University of Montana, Missoula, MT. <http://climate.umd.edu/> (406) 243-6793
October 2018 Newsletter, <http://climate.umd.edu/mtdrought/mtdrought-october-2018.pdf>

NWSFF Advisory Council

The Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage (NWSFF) Program has an Advisory Council to help advise the MT Department of Agriculture (MDA) on administering the NWSFF Program. The council is composed of 10 voting members: four certified forage producers, two county weed district reps., one livestock/ag rep., one processed forage rep., one outfitter/guide rep., and the Director of MDA. There are also two nonvoting ex officio members as well as several agency representatives. The council meets once a year in February in Helena at MDA. The 2019 meeting is scheduled for February 20th. Meeting details will be on the department's website: agr.mt.gov

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